

Aesthetical principles in degraded landscape rehabilitation

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Abstract. Human influenced or naturally degraded landscapes rehabilitation requires reliable scientific solutions, for their agricultural and silvicultural development as well as for their reintegration in the productive and/or ecological circuit. In this process, it is recommended to be taken into account several aesthetic principles as well, given the fact that landscapes, in terms of aesthetics, are considered either "aesthetic" or "unaesthetic". In terms of aesthetics, degraded landscape rehabilitation proves to be a difficult task, because it is almost impossible to recreate the real, expressive, living unity of nature.

Key Words: aesthetic principles, degraded landscapes.

Rezumat. Reabilitarea peisajelor degradate sub acțiunea factorilor naturali sau antropici presupune soluții științifice concrete, în vederea valorificării lor agricole sau silvice, a reintegrării lor în circuitul productiv și / sau ecologic. În acest demers este bine să se țină cont și de anumite principii estetice, știut fiind faptul că peisajele, potrivit judecății estetice, sunt apreciate ca frumoase sau urâte. Din perspectivă estetică, reamenajarea peisajelor degradate se dovedește a fi o întreprindere dificilă, pentru că este aproape imposibil de recreat unitatea adevărată, expresivă, vie, a naturii.

Cuvinte cheie: principii estetice, peisaje degradate.

Taken as it is, the landscape represents a natural reality in which the human being lives and which it can positively or negatively alter. Theoretically, it is necessary for us to establish what the signification and the value of the landscape actually represents for him as a human being belonging to this reality which objectively exists and which he often subjectively interprets and evaluates.

A necessary distinction is the one between the real landscape and its image, its appearance, its meaning as a landscape, as an object of aesthetic judgment. As nature, the landscape is a living being in which diversity and multiplicity is made of a multitude of individualities. In any landscape configuration, there are involved spatial and temporal elements, vegetable kingdom cyclicity, the presence of the animal kingdom, season rotation and the circadian rhythm. The landscape destiny is marked by its own physical, chemical and biological laws, by the matter games. The nature presents its own spontaneity that cannot be tamed and subdued. The landscape represents a spatialization of natural temporality which is characterized by cyclicity, novelty and repetition. Diversity and not the identity that characterizes industrial products are specific to nature. But in this whole diversity there is a harmonious unity as nothing seems to be chaotic, aleatory in a landscape in which no mark has been left by the human being. There is a certain freedom in nature because it is all about the life itself and it has not been yet invented a laboratory in which it might be created for example a virgin forest. There are, certainly, parks, gardens, green spaces, greenhouses which have their specific functions, relaxation and aesthetic contemplation functions. Normally, the human being should discover in the landscape his own freedom as a freedom of nature but, unfortunately, he feels free before nature which more often means freedom against nature, freedom to rule and destroy nature. This attitude led to an effective extinction of certain landscapes and to a landscape crisis which questions its recovery as a qualified and aesthetic environment. It refers to an overcoming of the environmental vision that aims at studying the life depending ambient.

As a subjective measure of reality, the landscape cannot be separated from the look that contemplates it. It represents the construction of our perceptions, the result of our subjectivity because we perceive what has a meaning to us. Every human being perceives the landscape through its own eyes, being influenced by numerous factors, by its own benchmarks.

The landscape also represents a cultural construction as shown in the European Landscape Convention, initiated in 20th of October 2000. The landscape is involved in the creation of local cultures, in the shaping of their regional, national and European identity. There are emblematic landscapes which distinguish in this globalized world a certain culture and which are integrated within the collective memory of landscapes through mythology, poetry, painting, movies, and postcards. This is why at this convention landscape politics, legislative and managerial landscape protection actions were absolutely necessary to be considered. All these measures equally target both the landscapes having kept their significance and the ones having been degraded due to natural or anthropogenic factors. Among the natural factors which cause landscape degradation there can be included natural disasters such as floods, landslides, storms and prolonged drought. Even if the laws of nature are involved in producing such phenomena the human and the direction in which human civilization has evolved play a negative role. Everything started with the modern age when, firstly theoretically and then practically the man wanted to subdue nature, forgetting that he is a part of it. Under Francis Bacon's slogan: „science means power“ The European found himself in rivalry with nature. In its turn, the theoretical distinction between nature and civilization and even their opposition in the name of reason presented serious consequences on both nature and human condition. Andrei Plesu's observation: "nature is conceived as a given which the ordinary man reports to from time to time. Not the periodicity but the continuity is first of all necessary for the restoration of our contract with nature" is relevant in this respect (Plesu A., 1980).

The anthropic intervention upon the interrelations established between the natural landscape components which led and still lead to their degradation is of great extent. Modern and aggressive agricultural practices, forest cover destruction, tourism, which causes environmental damage and transport, human settlements, the industry, especially the energetic and the extractive ones are considered among human actions that cause landscape damage. All these disturbing factors produce flora, wildlife, natural habitat and aesthetic landscape value alterations.

Environmental science researchers and movements draw attention especially to the impact of these human environmental interventions on the quality of life. Environmental ethics scientists blame us and talk about nature and animal rights which are as important as human rights. Aestheticians, who on Hegelian side treasure beauty in art more than in nature, and who on Kantian side support nature minority in relation to human beings appreciate the landscape beauty more through history and art, labeling landscapes as classical, romantic, baroque type, rococo type and minimalistic.

Artists, according to the movement which they belong to, are either trying to transpose on canvas or in poetry the feelings that a landscape arises in themselves or to capture its essence which makes it be a thing in itself or to truly copy it (realism) or to perceive it strictly optically (impressionism). Landscape architects try to model landscapes by the laws of architecture, establishing a correlation between building and environment and some gardeners arrange gardens after the model of landscape painting. There are in this way a great number of landscape poetics and criticism which are based on a variety of attitudes towards interpreting the same landscape, there are reading, poetic and narrative landscapes and theories of landscape painting. There is also an ostentatious contempt for certain landscapes depending on the culture, the temperament and the aesthetic interests of those who interpret it.

Scientists propose practical and concrete solutions for the reconstruction of "degraded areas" taking aesthetic principles too little into account and being more concerned with integrating such areas in the agricultural or forest circuit putting more thought in their economic exploitation and in their reintegration into a productive circuit.

In terms of aesthetics, "degraded areas" represent ugly landscapes lacking harmony, equilibrium and which cannot be aesthetically contemplated. It is true that there is also an aesthetic of ugliness found in poetry and painting which highlights the artistic valances of negative aesthetic categories such as banality, tediousness, the obsolete, the absurd and the bizarre. These categories, when applied to artistic creations can also be used in characterizing certain landscapes when they do not impose as forms that generate performance and are considered as disagreeable or boring.

The restoration of a degraded or in ongoing degradation landscape in terms of aesthetics is a difficult task because either aestheticism or kitsch can be reached in this way. It is almost impossible "to restore those materialistic details which guarantee the landscape material integrity (...), to recover the harmony and the music of the natural rhythm (Assunto R., 1996, p.150). This requires a profound aesthetic study in non-degraded landscapes. This cannot be made only by considering a landscape from outside, as a painting. Landscape contemplation is something active rather than passive and requires location within that certain landscape, living inside it. This is the only way in which we can see the colors, the light and shadow games, feel the fragrances, hear the sound of wind among leaves, the earth and the grass from under the feet, the air surrounding us. Distant contemplation also offers certain perceptions and representations that gain symbolic aspect. Specialists in degraded landscape planning must belong to a multidisciplinary team that might be capable of reconstructing the living unity and the landscape complexity. Even if the landscape spontaneity cannot be reproduced the man-made landscape has to be organized and structured by the laws of natural evolution. It is necessary to comply with laws of ecology in order to keep the ecosystem having been created closer to natural and to avoid reaching environmental distortion. Aesthetically, an unbalanced ecosystem incapable of self regulation and homeostasis is associated with disproportion, lack of measurement and disfigurement.

In terms of aesthetics, there are two main tendencies in degraded landscape planning which are also found in green space, park and garden planning the danger consisting in creating "a theatrical naturalness" (Plesu A., 1980, p.148). Trying to arrange nature by architectural laws and to subordinate nature to painting are still main ways of shaping the landscape so that it might be evaluated in terms of aesthetic categories.

Landscape architecture as art, science and landscape planning technique, is mainly concerned with organizing the space, with the structure and the landscape form. The structure and the form do not exist as separate sides being projections of the architectural space, either in the direction of the natural edge or in the direction of the spiritual edge of functionality. Functional aesthetics, with all its merits in formalism and grandiloquent decorativism control, generalizes the utility component and leads to a poverty of expressiveness. Constructivist aesthetics invokes constructivist elements as a major source of beauty in landscape architecture, supporting constructivist lineup freedom and highlighting the aesthetic values of this kind of system itself. In terms of formal aesthetics, the content is less important, the visual aspect of the architectural space being of greater importance. Positivist in essence, contesting the existence of objective beauty, philosophical aesthetics is based upon the study of the visual physiological perception in order to explain the various rules of composition and aesthetic categories. Its merit consists in the attention which has been attracted upon the active role of the subject in the landscape aesthetic perception. Semiotic aesthetics perceives landscape architecture as communication phenomena and language, rehabilitating the content and abandoning formal exclusivism.

In what concerns the landscape architectural language there have been made numerous attempts to explain the expressive potential of the architectural space and of its components-volumes, surfaces, directions. There were highlighted the light and shadow significance in considering spatial entities and color combinations and their effects on the human psychic were discussed too. In an attempt to establish the principles in architectural landscape composition was necessary to define and examine certain aspects such as the ones of element and global, series, motive, theme and variations, similarity and contrast, dominant and dominated, major and minor. A special

attention was paid to notions such as the ones of harmony, rhythm, symmetry, measurement, scale as well as to the ones of composition axis, illusions and optical corrections. Creating within the landscape structures generating beauty is not easy because the natural landscape is not static being in continuous motion determined by natural process intervention. Aesthetically, it is considered that an irregular structure, closer to reality, creates more powerful aesthetic emotions as the regular structure suggests monotony. Landscape structures can be either simple or complex, horizontally or vertically displayed, regular or irregular each having its own aesthetic valences. As in the case of architecture in itself, landscape architecture also questions inner-outer space, the relation between fullness and emptiness, the inner-outer perspective, the stylistic unity and the compositional center.

The pictorial approach within the landscape approach focuses on the color contrast and harmony, the relationship between colors and the feelings that they arouse. As well as in the case of landscape painting there are theorized the ways in which either the geometric perspective or the one obtained using tones and shades are realized, the curved line expressivity, forms and contents, the way on which light, in different moments of the day makes the same landscape seem different. From this perspective, the landscape is significant in its pictorial effects, being especially optically perceived.

The two distinctive general aesthetic and degraded landscape development ways, put into practice, create natural beauty capable of arousing aesthetic pleasure. Nature ugliness, often caused by human irresponsibility can be removed by humans because "not through landscape degradation and disfiguration has the man found his way to progress and civilization but by creating beauty and by surrounding himself with it in all of his critical moments in which he was about to become a victim of disaster. (Bândiu C., 2004).

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